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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [ASEC](#) [GV](#) [LI](#)

SUBJECT: PRESIDENT SIRLEAF'S POSITION AT ECOWAS SUMMIT

REF: MONROVIA 13

Classified By: Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) President Sirleaf confirmed to Ambassador January 12 that she was "instrumental" in removing a provision in the draft ECOWAS communique on Guinea calling for sanctions (leaving in a condemnation of the coup, suspension of Guinea from ECOWAS, and a demand that the CNDD take immediate steps to restore constitutional order) and having language added calling on the international community to continue financial support in order to keep the transition to constitutional rule on track. She repeated what she said in a press conference earlier that day that "the poor people in Guinea would suffer" from sanctions rather than the junta, but added her concern that sanctions might bring about demonstrations forcing the junta to react strongly.

¶2. (C) She remarked that the communique gave strong support for early elections, to be concluded in 2009, and that the Mano River Union leaders present (including Ivoirian president Gbagbo and Sierra Leonean president Koroma) backed her position.

¶3. (C) President Sirleaf told Ambassador that Guinea was making progress toward HIPC decision point and hoped the process will not go off track. She also hoped that the EC will not delay in providing EDF-10 funding to Guinea. Ambassador noted that the USG had already decided to impose sanctions on Guinea.

¶4. (C) Sirleaf confessed that she "still doesn't know why" Libyan leader Qadhafi stopped in Monrovia (reftel). While the two discussed bilateral assistance, Qadhafi barely raised Guinea, and gave no indication which faction Libya supported. On the other hand, Senegalese President Wade had called her about his concern that Liberian mercenaries were preparing to go to Guinea to back the Conte faction against the junta. She tried to assuage his fears, and told Ambassador she has sent security and intelligence teams to the border to investigate, and they have not yet found any evidence of Liberians crossing the border to fight.

¶5. (C) Comment: President Sirleaf is clearly concerned that instability in Guinea could cross over into Liberia, and she does not want to do anything to make matters worse. She is committed to the process for early elections as the solution to the present situation, but we still have disagreement on the best way to achieve lasting stability in Guinea.

THOMAS-GREENFIELD